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SUBJECT / SUJET: MONTREAL YMCA UNDERTAKES CRITICAL SELF-EXAMINATION

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Details of a far-reaching program of self-examination were announced today by the Montreal YMCA.

Its objective is to re-assess critically the policies and programs of the association, revising them to meet real contemporary needs.

"We believe strongly that voluntary associations have an essential part to play in the building of a strong democratic society," R.G. Rogers, assistant general secretary of the Montreal YMCA, told a news conference.

In such a society, he said, there is ample room for individual initiative and, "all cultures can flourish and be allowed the privilege of enjoying their differences."

Government bodies have a growing responsibility for dealing with community problems, but it would be disasterous if we were to rely on them completely, he said.

Mr. Rogers noted that the first YMCA in North America was founded in Montreal 115 years ago. In its early days the stress was on spiritual and educational activities. "Later, physical education became a major emphasis and, in fact, has been so successful that for many people this is the only image by which we are known today."

The YMCA is one of the few places where Christians, followers of other faiths, and those without any religious commitments, can meet to share mutual concerns.

"There is a growing desire to broaden the basis of our membership and the people we serve," said Mr. Rogers.

Another major objective of the Montreal YMCA is to contribute increasingly to the easing of racial tensions in the community by working co-operatively with similarly motivated groups.

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"Over the past five years, an increasing number of French-speaking Canadians have been taking part in YMCA activities," said Mr. Rogers. "At present, nearly one-third of the people we serve are French-speaking Canadians, some of whom have assumed positions of responsibility and leadership in the Association."

As part of the research program, each unit of the Montreal YMCA is assessing in depth the requirements of the community it serves to help develop clear plans for every branch and camp.

This study involves young people, as well as adult members and community leaders from all parts of Greater Montreal.

"As a youth-serving organization we are experimenting with better ways to work with youth -- not simply to do things for youth," said Mr. Rogers.

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